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DELEGATING AUTHORITY.

Who runs the government when the president is ill? This is an ancient question, but it is raised again as a result of President Eisenhower's illness.

Snap judgment in answering this question would come up with the answer: The vice president. The constitution provides that the powers of the presidency "shall devolve" on the vice president in case of the chief executive's death, resignation, or "inability to discharge" the powers and duties of his office.

But the fact remains that no legal body has ever decided what constitutes "inability" to handle the presidency, nor who shall decide when a president is in such a state.

That is why White House Press Secretary James C. Hagerty is asking Deputy Attorney General William P. Rogers for a legal opinion on what steps would have to be taken to delegate some of Mr. Eisenhower's powers while he recovers from his illness.

However, under the Eisenhower administration the nation is more fortunate than would have been the case under some presidents of another era. Mr. Eisenhower has set up a "team" to help him operate the government. He does not hoist all the responsibilities of the office on his own shoulders. Rather, operating under the "chain of command" system with which he was so familiar in his army career, he lets other members of his "team" handle much of the detail work.

But it must be remembered that a president cannot delegate all of his powers. There are certain functions which demand his attention and his action alone. These would include the signing of certain official documents which must bear a president's signature.

Both Vice President Richard M. Nixon and Secretary of State John Foster Dulles have announced that government work, both foreign and domestic functions, would continue without change during the president's illness. There are many details which these two men, Presidential Assistant Sherman Adams, Defense Secretary Charles E. Wilson, Defense Mobilizer Arthur S. Flemming, Central Intelligence Director Allen W. Dulles, and Presidential Assistant Harold Stassen are able to handle. But the bold fact still exists that there are some things a president must do himself.